



It comes as no surprise to those of us in the field of special education that the numbers of students identified with pervasive developmental disorders continues to increase. We are acutely aware of the need for highly qualified staff, effective strategies and defensible programs.

The Diagnostic Center North has seen an increase in the referrals for assessment services where the LEA questions are autism-related. For example:

- ♦ Is ASD the correct diagnosis?
- ♦ What strategies will improve communication?
- ♦ How do we improve social skills?
- ♦ How do we address problem behaviors?

Fifteen percent (15%) of all the students assessed last year were students with ASD. In addition, to accessing the complex needs of a student with autism, we continue to provide workshops, consultation opportunities, and Comprehensive Professional Development Projects focusing on autism. We've scheduled 30 workshops addressing Asperger Syndrome, Teaching Children with Autism, and The Activity Matrix: A Tool to Address IEP Goals in Meaningful Activities Throughout the Day. To access the schedule of workshops, go to www.dcn-cde.ca.gov.

This issue of the DCN Forum may provide some general information and recommended strategies to share with parents and staff. The DCN Forum can be downloaded at our website, www.dcn-cde.ca.gov.

What is Autism?

"Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life that affects the normal functioning of the brain,

impacting development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills." (Autism Society of America 2006)

What causes Autism?

"There is no known single cause for autism, but is generally accepted by the medical community that it is caused by abnormalities in brain structure or function.

Researchers are investigating a number of theories including the link between heredity, genetics and medical problems."

(Autism Society of America 2006)

What are effective interventions?

Educational programming should be based on the unique characteristics of the individual student. A diagnosis of ASD does not indicate how or what to teach. "No single intervention or approach has proven to be effective for every individual with ASD." (National Research Council). Ann England and Rebecca Steinberger have developed "Ten Educational Characteristics" special educators and service providers should consider when planning educational interventions for children with ASD:

- 1) **their abilities are uneven**
- 2) **they have difficulty paying attention is part of the syndrome**
- 3) **they learn better visually**
- 4) **change is not easily tolerated**
- 5) **extra time to process is necessary**
- 6) **they have difficulty performing on request**
- 7) **generalizing is difficult**
- 8) **transitions are hard**
- 9) **they remember things rotely**
- 10) **their motivation is unreliable.**

We're on the Web!
www.dcn-cde.ca.gov.



Diagnostic Center-North
39100 Gallaudet Drive
Fremont, CA 94538
Tel: 510- 794-2500
Fax: 510- 794-2513
mnielsen@dcn-cde.ca.gov



Ann England

Teaching Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Some General Considerations

Ann England, Speech and Language Specialist, CCC-SLP

Rebecca Steinberger, Education Specialist, M. A.



Rebecca Steinberger



DCN FORUM
Linda Hawkins
Editor

- * Provide early intervention.
- * Collaboration among all who are involved with the student (e.g., teacher(s), family, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, paraeducator, and other members of the IEP team, etc.) is paramount to ensure optimal outcomes.
- * Following a comprehensive assessment thoroughly document the educational programming in the IEP.
- * Make sure to address individual needs in the areas of communication, social interactions and behavior. Develop those skills the student needs to become as independent as possible in school, home and community both now and in the future.
- * Develop and use an Activity Matrix to ensure that goals and objectives are infused and addressed throughout the school day.
- * Provide a structured and consistent educational setting with appropriate supports and accommodations tailored to individual needs.
- * Plan for transitions.
- * Incorporate the student's interests when designing instructional activities and identifying reinforcers to increase motivation.
- * Provide choice making opportunities throughout the day to increase motivation and sustain attention to the task.
- * Use the student's strengths to teach deficit areas.
- * Accompany instruction with visuals (e.g., model, demonstration, picture, etc.)
- * Provide an individual visual schedule. Design the schedule based on the individual ability level of the student (e.g., object, photo, picture symbol, written.)
- * Provide visual supports as needed (e.g., individual schedule; mini-task activity schedule; first, then ____ card; wait card; finish card; take a break/time away card; timer/hourglass; social rule card; self-regulation card; change card, Social Stories, etc.)
- * Some students with an ASD may require an individually designed alternative and augmentative communication system to communicate effectively with others.
- * Strive to understand the impact of Autism on the student's behavior. Use positive behavior supports to help prevent problem behavior and teach students more prosocial ways for getting wants and needs known and met. Purposefully teach social interaction and social communication skills and strategies.
- * Provide opportunities for the student's IEP goals to be met in the least restrictive setting with appropriate supports and adaptations.

Resources for Visual Supports:

Use Visual Strategies:

www.usevisualstrategies.com

Social Stories:

<http://www.autism.org/stories.html>

<http://www.thegraycenter.org>

Visual Supports Tutorial:

<http://www.cenmi.org/matr/tutorials.asp>

Do to Learn:

<http://www.dotolearn.com>

Timetimer:

<http://www.timetimer.com>

Visual Supports: Center Autism and Related Disorders(CARD)

<http://card.ufl.edu/visual.htm>